

COBBETT'S WEEKLY POLITICAL REGISTER.

LONDON, SATURDAY, JAN. 11, 1817.

ADVERTISEMENT.

It is now necessary for me to notify, that I cannot permit any persons to *reprint* the Register, except such as may choose to do it in regular established *news-papers*; because, unless this prohibition be adopted, I can have no security, that my writings will not be *garbled*, and, indeed, that any one will not publish, like CHAPPELL of Pall Mall, vile trash under my name.—I, therefore, beg, that no one will, except as above-mentioned, reprint any part of any Number of this work: I have made the price *so low*, and the profit to Sellers *so high*, that neither the Readers nor the Trade can possibly have any reason to complain.—The price is 12s. 6d. a hundred, and if a thousand or more be taken by one person, and at one time, 11s. a hundred.—The Cheap Register published (wholesale) at No. 8, Catherine Street, Strand, London, by W. M. COBBETT, JUN. to whom all Letters *postage paid*, are requested to be addressed; but no Letters, not postage paid, can be received.

AN ADDRESS
TO THE

MEN OF BRISTOL,

On the Birth-Right of Petition.—On the Gagging Measures proposed by the Sons of Corruption.—On the great falling off in the Taxes.—On the probable Fate of the Fundholders.

London, 9th Jan. 1817.

MEN OF BRISTOL,

You, I mean, who, for many years past, have so bravely resisted the com-

bined threats and delusions of the two factions, which have so long been a curse to this country, and have made us almost ashamed to be *Englishmen*, a name which has always heretofore been the proudest of titles and distinctions. It is to you whom I address myself, and not to those poltroons, who crouch, like beaten spaniels, at every symptom of Corruption's displeasure.

It is now about five years since you stood forward so boldly in the cause of *Parliamentary Reform*. At that time Corruption had felt no check; she was at the height of her flight; her conceit and insolence were extreme; to open one's lips against her seemed to be as useless as it was dangerous. Yet, did you, even at that time, make your voices heard; you protested against the continuance of the war, when there appeared no other object in view than that of restoring the House of Bourbon and all the other despotisms of Europe; you declared your conviction, that ruin and misery would be brought upon your country; you exposed the arts which had been made use of to deceive you; in short, you carried on a contest worthy of freemen, and of freemen, too, breathing an air rendered pestiferous by the breath of slavery.

All your assertions have now been verified; all your apprehensions have now been proved to have been well-founded. Those assertions, which your

nation is nearly as populous as Great Britain, and though she has nearly as much trade and commerce, and is much more difficult to defend than this nation, and more difficult to govern than this nation might be. Next, you have a *Sinecure*, which you have secured for your Son, GEORGE HENRY Rose, who is (if all remains tight) to enjoy it *for his life after your death*. This office, agreeably to an account given in by yourself, in 1810, yielded you upon an average, 4,946 pounds a year, though you stated that you did nothing for it. Next you have a *Sinecure* as Keeper of Records in the Exchequer, 400 pounds a year. Next your son, WILLIAM STUART Rose, has a *Sinecure* as Clerk of Exchequer Pleas, 2,137 pounds a year. Your son, GEORGE HENRY, is now, I believe, a foreign minister, and once was, as this nation has good reason to remember, a minister from this country to America, where the charges on his account amounted to much more than the President's salary. You yourself have received in *salary* more than 4,000 pounds a year upon an average of the last twenty six years. We will leave out the *ambassador*, and then the yearly receipt of you and one son, not including dependents and what we have not in the books, is as follows :

	POUNDS
Treasurer of the Navy.....	4,324
Keeper of Records	400
Clerk of Parliaments	4,946
Clerk of Pleas	2,187
	<hr/> £11,857

Or, in words, *eleven thousand, eight hundred and fifty seven pounds a year*. This is all paid by the people, and, in great part, by the *Labouring People*; and yet, no Mr. MALTHUS has the impudence to propose the passing of a law to prevent any of *your family* from marrying !

But, now, let us see what this would amount to if, instead of your having received it, it had been put into a

Saving Bank for the People. Your salary has been more than 4,000 pounds a year for twenty-six years .

	POUNDS.
The salary, at 4000l. a year	104,000
The Clerkship of the Parliaments you have had 28 years, at 4,646l. a year	138,488
Keeper of Records, 45 years, at 400l. a year	
Clerk of Pleas (I guess) about 20 years, at 2,187l.	43,740
	<hr/> £304,228

We leave out the Ambassador, and also all that you have received for *bags and wax* ! This last, without including your salary before you were Secretary of the Treasury, would make a nice little sum. I cannot find the date when your son, William Stuart Rose, got his *Sinecure Place* of 2,187 pounds a year, but, I find him in a report dated more than eight years ago, and I take it at a guess at twenty years. At any rate, there are a good round *three hundred thousand pounds* in PRINCIPAL MONEY. I have not time to calculate the compound interest of it; but, if principal and interest should fall a little short of *half a million of pounds*, you will confess, at any rate, that this money, if it had remained amongst the people, might have formed a very nice *Saving Bank* !

Now, GEORGE, begging some Parson in your neighbourhood to send me an exact computation of the compound interest on your receipts, and giving the Romsey JACKSON full liberty to put this letter, particularly the last part of it, into print, and to circulate it freely amongst your voters and slaves of Southampton, Christ Church, and Lymington, I remain with such feelings as a man like me ought to entertain towards a man like you,

WM. COBBETT.

The next REGISTER will contain an Address to THE PEOPLE OF BRISTOL.

Entered at Stationers' Hall.

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All your assertions have now been verified; all your apprehensions have now been proved to have been well-founded. Those assertions, which your

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enemies *then* called *false* and *sedition*, they *now* put forth themselves as *acknowledged* and *notorious truths*. Yet, they have not learned to be *just* towards you. They appear to have derived no profit from the past. And, though those dreadful calamities, which you foretold in 1812, have actually come upon us; though your enemies acknowledge that they are come upon us, so far are they from confessing their former errors, that they seem, more than ever, resolved to be the persecutors and slanderers of those who warned them of the danger, and who called upon them to prevent it.

My good friends of Bristol, the circumstances attending your recent Meeting on Brandon Hill, have excited a great deal of attention, as they exhibit a striking instance of the conduct of the Magistrates to public Meetings. You had, in a very respectable number, signed a Requisition to your Mayor, to be pleased to call a Meeting, in order to take into consideration the propriety of presenting a petition to Parliament, for the abolition of *Sinecures* and *Unmerited Pensions*, for a *Reduction* of the *Standing Army*, and for a *Constitutional Reform* of the *Commons' House of Parliament*. To this Requisition the Mayor gave a refusal; and, instead of calling a Meeting of peaceable citizens to deliberate on their rights and to send up their petitions in this time of dreadful distress, his worship thought proper to call a meeting of a very different sort; namely of *troops* of all descriptions, and from all parts of the country!

Now, let us take a full view of this

an saction. You will observe that the *right of petition* is, in fact, our only safeguard against being as much slaves as the negroes are; for if men are not permitted to make their sufferings and their injuries *known* to those who possess the power to see them righted, the rich and powerful may knock out the brains of the poor with impunity. Suppose a rich man were to murder his labourer, and suppose that no officer of justice would do his duty towards punishing such offender. What redress is there for the widow and children of the murdered man? Why, a petition to king, or parliament, or both, makes the matter known to those who have the power to redress, and proceedings are adopted accordingly. Having endeavoured to *prevent* the people's petitioning was one of the crimes, which drove the House of Stuart from the Throne of this kingdom. For, as all the world knows, this present family is not the family who are entitled to the throne by regular hereditary right. They have a much *better* title to it; that is to say, *an act of Parliament*, which appointed them to reign instead of the Stuarts, who had behaved in so tyrannical a manner, that our forefathers very wisely set them aside for ever, and put up this family in their stead. The tyrant James the Second, who was the last of the Stuarts, endeavoured to gag the people of England, in the same way that the sons of Corruption are now recommending that we should be gagged. And in that memorable Statute, called the *Bill of Rights*, it is expressly declared, that one of the crimes, for which he and his family were to forfeit the crown, was,

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the *obstructing of petitions*. The same bill declares, that the right of presenting petitions to the king or either House of Parliament, is an *inherent* right, a part of the *birth-right* of every Englishman.

The Mayor of Bristol, was not, that I know of, bound to call a meeting upon your requisition: but, I am very sure, that you had a right to meet, at any time or place, or in any manner that you chose; and, I am very certain also, that all those persons acted *unlawfully*, who, by any means whatever, endeavoured to prevent you from meeting, whether by an open display of force, or by written or verbal threats. The conduct of all those who published bills, threatening to *punish*, by turning off, &c. the men who attended the meeting, have been guilty of a *conspiracy* to obstruct petitioning: and, therefore, I would very urgently recommend to you to obtain *proof*, I mean legal proof, of their having published such hand bills. At any rate, get all the bills, and keep them safe; and, I would advise you, also, to take minutes in writing, and to be ready with evidence to prove on oath, the fact of *posting of troops round, or near, your place of meeting*. With this evidence ready, a petition to parliament against these proceedings may be strenuously maintained; and, we shall see, then, what the right of petition really is; we shall see what the *birth-right* is really worth; we shall see, at once, what we have to trust to, in future; we shall see, whether the right of *praying* be, at last, to be denied us.

But in the meanwhile, what a sight

did Bristol exhibit on that day; on the memorable 26th of December. The people, in the deepest state of misery, beg their chief magistrate to preside over them, while they agree upon a petition to the parliament; and their chief magistrate chooses rather to surround himself, and fill the city with *troops*! Upon what *ground* were those troops called in?—There had been no riot. There had been no indication of an intention to riot. In every part of the kingdom had numerous meetings been held, and, in no one instance, had there been any riot, either before or after the meeting; for, as to the contemptible thing in London, it arose out of the assemblage in the Old Bailey, which had been drawn together by the *hanging of four men that same morning*, and from which spot the rioters, chiefly *starving sailors*, went almost directly to the gunsmith's shop. The meeting of *petitioners*, in Spa-fields, had no more to do with the sailors' riot than you had. The meeting was not even *interrupted* by that riot. It was perfectly tranquil, went through its business, and dispersed without a single breach of the peace. But, this *sham plot* has now been completely exposed. Mr. PRESTON, whom the base proprietors of the *COURIER* and the *TIMES* newspapers represented as having "*confessed*" himself concerned in an "*insurrection, conspiracy and plot*," is out upon *bail*, though they asserted, that *he had confessed his guilt as a traitor*! The elder Mr. WATSON, whom these same bloody men had asserted to have been

proved to have participated in the robbery of the gunsmith's shop, is committed for trial; but, *for what?* Why, for endeavouring, it is alleged, to hurt or maim, *a patrol who seizes hold of him in the dark, out in some fields near London!* Thus, all is blown to air, as I said it would in my No. 24 of the last volume. Thus, the charge against this unfortunate gentleman also was *wholly false*. And yet, it is the *Courier* and the *Times* who cry out against the *licentiousness of the press*. We shall see whether the law officers of the Crown will stretch forth the arm of protection for Messrs. Preston and Watson, whose lives these bloody men have so directly and so audaciously aimed at. The columns of these papers will prove, that the proprietors have endeavoured, by the means of falsehoods which they *must* have invented, to take away the lives of these gentlemen: and, is there *no punishment* for them? Are they to do these things with impunity?

Thus, then, it has been proved, not only, that there was no rioting on the part of the Petitioners in London, but, that they, under the guidance of the very same gentleman, who took the lead at your meeting, remained quiet at their post, while riot was going on in the City. What ground was there, therefore, for the military preparations on the part of the Mayor of Bristol. And, what ground was there for swearing in 2,000 *special constables*? There have been held meetings at which petitions have been signed for a Reform of Parliament, by more, I believe, than *half a million of men!* And, at no one of

these meetings has any riot taken place. Nay, rioting has *ceased* as meetings for reform have *increased*. At DUNDEE and in the ISLE OF ELY and in SUFFOLK and at BIRMINGHAM, where there have been riots, there have been NO meetings for *petitioning*. In short, meetings for petitioning have put an end to rioting. And, this is very natural; because, when meetings are held, and the people's attention is drawn towards the *real causes of their misery*, they, at once see, that the remedy is not a riotous attack upon the property of their neighbours; and, they wait with patience and fortitude to hear what answer the parliament will give to their petitions.

It seems to me, therefore, very wonderful, that those who *have property*, and who do not *share in the taxes*, should not be eager to promote meetings to petition; but the conduct of some of *your* rich neighbours has more than folly in it; it is deeply tinged with tyranny. I allude to the *threats* which they published against all those of their workmen, who should attend the meeting on Brandon Hill, and which threats ought never to be forgotten by *you*. But this hatred to the cause of public liberty is, I am sorry to say it, but too common amongst merchants, great manufacturers, and great farmers; especially those who have *risen suddenly* from the dunghill to a chariot. If we look a little more closely into the influence of riches, in such a state of things as this, we shall be less surprised at this apparently unnatural feeling in men who were, but the other day, merely journeymen and labourers themselves

—As soon as a foolish and unfeeling man gets rich, he becomes desirous of making the world believe, that *he never was poor*. He knows that he has neither *birth* nor *education* to recommend him to the respect of those who have been less fortunate than himself. Though they pull their hats off to him, he always suspects that they are looking back to his mean origin; and instead of adopting that kindness towards them, and that affability which would make them cheerfully acknowledge his superiority, he endeavours, by a distant and rigid deportment, to extort from their fears that which he wants the sense to obtain from their love. So that, at last, he verifies the old maxim: "*Set a beggar on horse-back, and he'll ride to the Devil.*"

This is the very worst species of aristocracy. It has all the *pride* and none of the *liberal sentiments* of the nobility and great gentry; and, the *farming* and *manufacturing* aristocracy is worse, a great deal, than the *mercantile*, because the latter must have more knowledge of the world, which is a great corrector of insolent and stupid pride. As to the *farmers*, who have grown into riches all of a sudden, they are the most cruel and hardened of all mankind. There are many of them, who really look upon their labourers as so many brutes; and, though they can scarcely spell their own names or pronounce the commonest words in an intelligible manner, they give themselves airs, which no gentleman ever thought of. I have heard sentiments from men of this description, which would not have disgraced the lips of negro-drivers, or

of a Dey of Algiers. Such men are always seeking to cause their origin to be forgotten. They would with their hands pull down their superiors and with their feet trample down their inferiors; but, as they are frequently *tenants*, and as their meanness is equal to their upstart pride; as they are afflicted with

"Meanness that soars, and pride that licks
"the dust,"

their chief aim is to trample into the very ground all who are beneath them in point of pecuniary circumstances, in order that they may have as few equals as possible, and that there may be *as wide a distance as possible between them and their labourers*.

Such men are naturally enemies to any Reform that would restore the great mass of the people to liberty and happiness; and so blinded are they by these their base passions, that they almost prefer being *ruined themselves*, to seeing their labourers enjoy their rights. Of the same materials a great part of the *Master Manufacturers* appear to be composed; for, in almost every instance, they have declined to *condescend* to co-operate with the people at large. They will, however, soon see, that their hopes of maintaining their monopoly of happiness and plenty are delusive. They and the Upstart Farmers have only *begun* to taste the fruit of the system, which they have so long assisted to support. The axe is, indeed, *laid* to the *root* of their riches; but, as yet, the trunk and branches hardly feel the effects of its blows. They will find, when, perhaps, it may be too late, that prosperous farmers and master manufacturers cannot

exist without happy journeymen and labourers; and, they will also find, that the measures, which are necessary to preserve their property, are those and those only which will insure to the people at large the enjoyment of all their constitutional rights.

This race of men seem *alarmed* at the idea of their labourers and journeymen having votes at elections as well as they! And why not? Are not those journeymen and labourers *as heavily taxed*? Have they not wives and families? Have they not liberty and life to preserve? The upstart, big-bellied, swell-headed farmer can bluster and bully (*out of his landlord's hearing*) enough about *Sinecures* and *Pensions*. He can swear and rave on this score like a madman. He can rail against the taxes which he has to pay, and against the tythes too he can curse like a Cossack or Pandour. But bid him *come to a meeting*, or *put his hand to a petition*, and you soon see what a wretched selfish thing he is. He would gladly enough see the people push forward to obtain *a repeal of taxes*, and to ease him of the weight of *Sinecures* and *Pensions*; but, a *Reform*, which would give to this same people *rights equal to himself*, he does not *understand*; he “does not see *what good* it would do;” though, if selfishness had not wholly blinded him, he would see that *no good* can possibly be done *without it*.

You, my good friends of Bristol, who have, upon the late occasion, experienced so much annoyance from this description of men, or, at least, from men resembling them in point of motives and character, should not fail

to bear in mind who the *individuals* have been; that is to say, you should keep safe all the *threatening* hand-bills which they published to obstruct you in the exercise of your invaluable right of petition. For, be you well assured, that the *ensuing session of parliament* will never pass over without something being done to call the conduct of these persons in question. What would have been said of any of you, who should have put up bills, *threatening* to set fire to the ware houses and dwellings of the merchants, if they called in troops, or did any other thing, to prevent you from meeting to petition? Yet, would this have been *more* unlawful, or *more* cruel, than for them to threaten you with *starvation*, if you persisted in meeting to petition? To have issued such incendiary threats would, indeed, have been criminal in a high degree, and would have merited severe punishment, because no man has a right to put another man in fear for his life or his property, and I would much sooner forgive a man who should rob me on the highway or who should steal my sheep or my horses, than a man who should threaten to destroy my house or goods by fire. What, then, ought to be my feelings towards a man, who, without any provocation, without any offence against him, without any attempt to injure him in any way whatever, and merely because I proposed to exercise my own undoubted right, were to threaten to deprive me of house and home and even of bread for myself and my family? What ought to be my feelings against such a man? I leave you to judge. And,

when you have decided, you will want no one to tell you what feelings *you* ought to entertain towards those cruel and insolent men, who have published, or uttered in any way whatever, threats against you upon the late memorable occasion.

Quitting, now, the particular scene before us, I beg leave to call your attention, and also the attention of all who love their country and its liberties and its peace, to the endeavours, which Corruption's Press is making use of in order to pave the way, if possible, for the enactment of GAGGING BILLS. Observe, that I am in no fear, that these endeavours will succeed, and that I am convinced, that more than one half of us must be *actually killed*, before such a project could be put in force. But, the *endeavours*, to produce this state of slavery, or this scene of civil war and bloodshed, it is my duty to notice *betimes*, and to warn my country against their pernicious and diabolical authors.

You must have observed, indeed every man with his eyes open must be well convinced that it is the hope of a *Reform*, which has hitherto kept the country in a state of tranquillity under its unparalleled sufferings.— This hope has been excited by public meetings and more especially by *publications*, and, amongst these publications, *mine* certainly may claim a distinguished place. Now, this being the case, manifestly and notoriously the case, in the usual course of things it would have followed, that the writers, who profess to be *friendly* to the government, would have ap-

plauded my labours, seeing that the tendency and the real effect of them is to preserve the public tranquillity; to prevent those crimes which the Judges so severely reprobate, and which they punish very frequently by a sentence of DEATH, as was the case a little while ago in Cambridge-shire and in one or two other counties, and as is, indeed, generally the case when any serious riot occurs.

But, the COURIER, the TIMES, the SUN, the POST, and some others of Corruption's sons have discovered an uncommon degree of uneasiness at this tranquillizing work. They have been *disappointed*. They wanted riots, bloodshed, and hangings and quarterings. These were things which they wanted to see going on; and, then, they supposed, that the subject of *Reform* would be lost sight of now, as it was amidst the noise of the riots in London, in 1780, when the late Duke of Richmond actually had brought in a Bill for Annual Parliaments.

Thus disappointed by the good sense, the information, the moderation, and real public spirit of the people, the sons of Corruption have become almost frantic. There is another *latent* reason, which I will mention by-and-by; but, it is impossible not to see the fact, for it stares us in the face in all their pages. They *began* more than two months ago. Even then the Courier said, that the Public ought *to watch* that *peaceable* doctrine that was preached up with so much *malignity*! Did you ever before hear of *peaceable* malignity! The writer, who is a *wicked old hack*, said, that all this calling upon the "*rabble* to

"be *peaceable* was a proof of some
 "*deep design* against the constitution."
 The design was indeed somewhat *deep*,
 for it aimed at a radical reform of all
 grievances, and a digging and rooting
 up of all corruptions.

After some time, however, these
 corrupt men, whose papers are read
 by the fools and knaves of the nation,
 could no longer refrain from a direct
 attack on the *Register*, which they
 asserted, would if not put a stop to,
SOME HOW OR OTHER, overthrow
 the *Constitution*, and, as they always
 mean *Corruption*, when they make
 use of the word *Constitution*, their
 opinion was, I would fain hope,
 perfectly correct; and I verily do
 believe, that my little Book and Cor-
 ruption cannot live in the same country
 for any great length of time; and, as
 I am very sure, that the liberty of the
 press must be *wholly and openly anni-*
hilated, before the *Register* can be put
 a stop to, I am not at all afraid to
 predict, that, in a very short time,
 Corruption will be overthrown to the
 great benefit of king and parliament
 and people.

But, now let us hear what these men
 really say upon the subject. The pro-
 prietor of the *COURIER*, on the 2d
 instant, has these words.—"*We have*
 "received from several parts of the
 "country *complaints* of the *mischief*
 "done in many places, attempting
 "in all, *by these cheap twopenny trash*
 "*publications*. They are addressed
 "to all the bad passions, they *inculcate*
 "*the worst feelings*, hatred of Govern-
 "ment, want of respect for public
 "Authorities, disobedience, and dis-
 "affection. But *Parliamentary Re-*

form is their pretext, and the
 "pretext of the Meetings which they
 "provoke. But no one can be de-
 "ceived as to their real object—the
 "*destruction of the Constitution*.
 "What the OFFICERS OF THE
 "CROWN ARE DOING, OR IN-
 "TEND TO DO, OR WHETHER
 "THEY DO NOT INTEND TO DO
 "ANY THING, we know not. But,
 "we are quite sure that if *something*
 "*be not done, and quickly too*, the
 "evil, we will not say will become
 "incurable, but at least, it will be
 "*very, very difficult of cure indeed!*
 "Strange and sorrowful contemplation
 "it is to see *the Constitution*, to
 "which we have owed our safe conduct
 "through the great struggle, which
 "has been the source of *our security*
 "and our *greatness*, treated with scorn,
 "contumely, and ingratitude."

In his paper of the next day he
 complains, that public meetings "di-
 "vert the *time* and *attention* of the
 "civil and *military authorities* from
 "their *private concerns* and *public*
 "*duties*, and compel them to exercise
 "that care and wealth in restraining
 "the turbulent and guarding the
 "public peace, which ought to be
 "directed to *relieving the distressed*
 "and *rewarding the industrious*." And then he suggests the propriety
 of *dispersing*, or *preventing* such
 meetings by *force of arms*. "It
 "is," says he, "therefore, a question
 "that the peaceable inhabitants of
 "all parts are deeply interested in
 "asking, whether *the constitution*
 "does or does not invest the civil
 "magistrate with authority to *check*
 "*meetings* which, be their avowed

"object *what it may*, prove themselves by the language and sentiments of the speakers, as well as their actual effect on the multitude, to *tend* to nothing but disorder and vice, as an immediate consequence, and ultimately to *sedition* and *rebellion*?"

Now my friends of Bristol, bear in mind, that the man, who has the impudence to publish this; the man who thus insults us, was, not many years ago, a *journeyman taylor*. His name is STUART, or STEWART, and, from the shop-board Corruption has given him a hoist into a chariot. There is a man, who writes for Stuart, whose name is STREET: and, as the times are now growing serious, this man and his employer too must soon be dragged out before the public. No man ought to be suffered, in these times, to throw his poison from behind a curtain. Let the nation *know* who are the hatchers of plots and the proposers of *Gagging Bills*. Let those who *live* by Corruption, come forth and *own her openly* for their patroness. Let them write what they will; but, let them be *known* to the people as *I am* and as I always have been,

The alarms of these corrupt men are by no means groundless; for, the wounds that Corruption is now receiving will *never be cured*. It is *too late*, even now, for those great Doctors "THE LAW OFFICERS," if they were so disposed, to come to her aid. She may reel along a little while; but she is much about in the state of a wolf, to which the hunter has given the *mortal blow*, and which is dragging his dying carcass into a thicket.

This base writer, who has, within these six weeks, been guilty of every crime that a man can commit with a pen, finding himself exposed, and, indeed, finding *his paper falling off in sale*, is eager to set the *Law Officers* to work in order to put a stop to the cause of his disgrace and decline. He does not know, he says, "*what the Law-officers intend to do, or whether they do or do not, intend to do any thing*." And, as he seems so full of curiosity upon this head, I will tell him *what the Law Officers do intend to do*. They fully intend to file a *criminal information ex-officio* against the parties concerned in this little Book; but, they do not intend to do this, until they see something *criminal in it*, and we will take special care, that they shall never see that. This prostituted writer seems to think, that it is of no consequence, whether we violate the law or not. He seems to think, that there is no more law for any one who espouses the cause of Reform than there is for a *mad dog*. He seems to look upon the Attorney and Solicitor General as a brace of bloodhounds, whom he, the impudent varlet, can let loose upon any one, whether there has been a breach of the law or not! I know nothing of the character and disposition of these gentlemen. Hitherto their course has certainly formed a striking contrast with that of their predecessor. But I will bespeak neither their good will nor their ill will. I do not know them, and, therefore, I cannot *love* them; and, they may be well assured, that I do not *fear* them. Every paper that goes from under my hand has a tendency to

promote the peace, and to restore the happiness and honour of my country; and, though I by no means desire the trouble of grappling with "Law-officers," as the *Courier* calls them; I fear them not, more than I do the *Courier* himself; though I will not be so rude and so unjust as to appear to suppose, that there can exist any feeling in common between those gentlemen and a reptile like him.

But, this man seems to despair of *legal proceedings*; for, he has repeatedly said, that he knows not what can be done, but that *something must be done* to put a stop to this publication. Now I can tell him of one sort of thing. When *Cockburn* and *Ross* entered the defenceless city of Washington, and set fire to the *Congress House*, some of their people went to the printing office of a Mr. GALE, who had written on the side of his country, and tore down his establishment and scattered his types about the street. This is *one way* of silencing a press! But, that was in an invaded country, and when there was no law but law-martial; and, we shall not, I hope, see this in England; and, if we were to see it, it would not *pay the interest of the Debt*. What, then would the *Courier* recommend? Nothing short of an *act of Parliament*, I dare say! Now, let us suppose him sitting down to frame an act to suit his purpose. I am not supposing, that any minister, nor the underling of any minister, would have the folly or impudence to think of such a thing; but, what may not a man like this be supposed capable of? The following, then, would, I suppose,

be the Bill that this son of Corruption would recommend.

A Bill for the better security of Corruption, and for perpetuating the miseries and disgrace of the United Kingdom.

WHEREAS one William Cobbett (an old offender in the same way) has, for some years last past, and especially within the last three months, been, by the means of a certain Weekly trash publication, endeavouring to undermine, and throw down the Corinthian Pillar of Corruption, and, at the same time to preserve the peace and restore the happiness of the United Kingdom; AND, WHEREAS these efforts tend directly to do great and lasting injury to all those, who, directly or indirectly, live and fatten upon the profits of Bribery, Corruption, Perjury, and Public Robbery, and threaten more particularly to produce the total ruin and final starvation of the proprietors of the *Courier*, the *Times* and others their fellow labourers in the fruitful vineyard of literary imposture and fraud, including, of course, JACKSON of Romsey and CHAPPELL of Pall-Mall; AND, WHEREAS, sad experience has proved, that though there are about twenty thousand Clergymen of the Church of England, the greater part of whom abhor the said William, and though there are as many Tax-gatherers as receive upwards of three millions a year for the collection and management of taxes, and that though there are many hundreds of persons in offices of various sorts,

exclusive of about twenty thousand officers of the army and navy, many of whom have now a great deal of leisure, and that though there are some thousands of Sinecurists, Pensioners, and Grantees, and that though there are vast swarms of Lawyers of all ages and sizes, yet, that no one has been found to *answer* the writings of the said William, notwithstanding Corruption pervades nineteen twentieths of all the Reviews, Magazines and newspapers in the Kingdom; AND, WHEREAS it is expedient to prevent the said William Cobbett from proceeding in his said dangerous courses, BE IT, THEREFORE, ENACTED, that the said William shall write and publish no more and that he shall neither talk nor think, nor dream without the express permission of the said proprietors of the Courier and Times or of their supporters and abettors.

Though not in this *form*, perhaps, yet to this *amount*, would the wishes of those people go. But, my worthy friends of Bristol, be in *no fear*; for you may be well assured, that, if any such thing were to be *attempted*, such an uproar would be raised as never was before heard in this country; because, in such an attempt, every one would see the inevitable and speedy establishment of downright despotism and *martial law*, which, as the French saying is, "would leave people of property nothing but *" their eyes to cry with,"* and, would, therefore, put us all upon a level.

Oh, no! The Ministers are not so very foolish as to be urged, thus, into the very gulph of despotism. They

know well, that silencing the press would not enable them to pay the interest of the Debt; and, they ought to know, that to silence the press could not *possibly* produce any other effect, than that desperation, which would, and which must, end in general commotion and desolation. Just the same may be said of this vile incendiary's endeavours to urge the Mayors and other *Magistrates* to "*check meetings,*" that is to say, to prevent them by the use of *military* or other *force*. If these Magistrates were to act thus illegally; if they were thus to set the Constitution at open defiance; if they were to say to the people, "though you are starving, you shall not meet to petition; the Bill of Rights was not intended for *you*;" "you have no pretensions to the *Birth-right* of Englishmen:" If the Magistrates were to act thus, what would be the consequence? Could they flatter themselves, that such measures would be productive of *peace*? I think they are not so infatuated. The Mayor of LEICESTER, in *refusing* to call a Meeting in that town, tells the people, that Meetings "have been held, in *" other places, professing similar objects, and have ended in riot, sedition, and bloodshed."* I should be glad to know *where* these meetings have been held? Not in *this kingdom*, I will take my oath if it be necessary, as far as any intelligence has reached London. The pretended *plot* in London has been proved to be *wholly false*; it has been now *proved*, in the most satisfactory manner, that the *Meeting* had no connection with the *riot*; that the riot arose out of a mob who assembled to see four men hanged; that the rioters

consisted chiefly of, and had for their leaders, a parcel of *starving sailors*; that the Meeting carried its business through without a single breach of the peace, and that it ended not in "*riot, sedition and bloodshed*," but in the most orderly and quiet dispersion at the recommendation of Mr. HUNT, who took the lead during the proceedings.

But so far from this assertion of the Mayor of Leicester being true, it is the *contrary* of the truth; for, as I observed before, where there *have* been "*riot, sedition, and bloodshed*," there have been no meetings for Reform. Where is it, that these riots have taken place within the last nine months? Why, in the *Isle of Ely*, in *Wales*, a pretended one at *Birmingham*, in *Suffolk*, at *Dundee*. And, at *none* of those places have there been any Meetings for Reform. Now, what will the Mayor of Leicester *answer* to this? Does it shew his cause to be *good* who can make such assertions? And, do the enemies of Reform think, that the friends of that measure are to be silenced by such means? While I think of it, let me ask, where are the *two members* for Leicester? I hope the meeting at that place will not forget to instruct *them* what to do at the ensuing proposition of the measure to parliament.

A letter from a gentleman in Glasgow dated 30th Dec. has the following passage, which may serve as an additional answer to the Mayor of Leicester: "*Since I wrote you, there have been Meetings at Airdrie, at Kilbarchan, at Dumbarton, at Carmunnock, at Eaglesham, from all which petitions will be forwarded on the meeting of*

parliament. The working people are actually bordering on starvation. A subscription has been set going here for their relief, but from the giving a man only one shilling a week and if a family, two or three shillings it has a tendency rather to irritate than to soothe; and, *nothing but hope, that Parliament will listen to our Petitions is keeping the Country quiet.*" The same accounts come from all parts of the country; and, there never was so general an expectation that relief and redress will be obtained by the lawful means of *petition*. Can the Mayor of Leicester contradict this? He certainly cannot; and, upon what then, does he ground his assertion?

No, my friends of Bristol, the *Courier* and *Times*, and their foolish and wicked supporters may call for GAGGING BILLS, but no Gagging Bills will be passed. To suspend the *Habeas Corpus Act* must, in time of peace, be regarded as the establishment of a permanent military despotism; and, if the government were base and tyrannical enough to wish for this, which I cannot believe it never could be so foolish; for, what would be the *effects*? The instant annihilation of all *pecuniary confidence*; an end to all *credit*; an end to all *contracts*; a blowing up of the *funds*; desertion and abandonment of the country by every one who could possibly remove his property or industry to *America*. These would be some, amongst the *least terrible*, of the effects of those measures which the *COURIER* and *TIMES* propose, which they are labouring to pave the way for, but which will not, be you well assured, be adopted. It is *possible*, that the

may be a man or two, possessed of some influence, who would drive things to desperation; but, while I can hardly extend my belief thus far, I am quite sure, that such influence, if put forth, would be resisted instantly, seeing, that a military despotism, if it could exist in England, openly avowed, for a year, would cut up all funded property, and, indeed, all other property, as completely as they could be cut up by universal anarchy and confusion; and, that, after all, confusion and bloodshed must overspread the land.

Let us be confident, therefore, that the Parliament, seeing the state, into which the country has been brought, seeing the miseries into which it has been plunged, and seeing that a cordial union of us all is absolutely necessary to our salvation, will, at last, yield to our prayers, and give that Reform which the nation has so long sought, and without which, as dear bought experience bids us conclude, we never can again see happy and honourable days.

The corrupt press itself acknowledges, that the taxes have fallen off in such a degree as that they will now hardly yield enough to pay the charges on account of the Debt, which requires 44 millions of pounds a year. But, one of my ploughmen shall bet the COURIER a hundred pounds, that the whole of the taxes, collected in 1817, do not amount to 35 million of pounds, unless the value of the paper-money be again changed, Now, as the Debt takes 44 millions a year, and the Army, Civil List, &c. have been estimated to take about 26 millions more, how are these to be paid out of 35 millions? Something,

then, must take place when the parliament meets. There must be some change, and that a pretty great change too.

Now, Men of Bristol, I hope you will do me the justice to recollect, that, for eleven years past, I have endeavoured to make the government see, that ruin would fall upon the country, unless the squandering of money was put a stop to, and, even, in that case, I always contended, that the nation never could continue to pay the interest of the Debt in full. You will please also to recollect, that I have been accused of folly, of wickedness, and almost of robbery for this. To reduce the interest of the Debt was called a breach of national faith, and I was stigmatized as a rogue for supposing such a thing possible, just as if I myself had owed the Debt! Well! Keep all this in mind, if you please, and, at the same time, keep your eye on the acts of the next Session of Parliament, which, as I have before observed, will, I believe, produce events more important than all the Sessions for the last hundred years.

You will observe, that the Fundholders now receive five pounds a year for every hundred pounds of their principal money. If enough money cannot be raised to pay them so much interest, they must have less; or, the estates of the landholders must be seized to be given to the fundholders! Here is a pretty dilemma! Here is a matter quite sufficient, one would think, to engage the attention of all the great men, to whom we pay such handsome salaries. This difficulty, together with the ruin of farming and manufacturing and commerce, are enough to astound the

wisest of men ; and when to these are added a weight of poor-rates, approaching in amount to that of the whole *rent* of all the land and all the houses, the spectacle is sufficient to strike terror into the hearts of those who have assumed a *responsibility* upon the subject.

Having before our eyes, then, a great nation crumbling into a heap of ruins, have we not a right, now that things are come to this horrid pass, to *pray* to be admitted to choose our representatives ? It is very certain, that there must have been a want of wisdom or integrity *somewhere* ; for it never can be wise or just to reduce a nation to ruin and misery. For many, many years, the Reformers have been abused as foolish and wicked men. They were *put down by force* in 1794. They have had no power. All their petitions and all their writings have been rejected and despised. Therefore, *they* have had no hand in producing these dreadful calamities. They have suffered in common with all those who have not fed upon the taxes ; but they have always been kept from any share in the powers of the government.

It is very necessary to keep this in mind, because to those who have had the *power* and the *profits* ought the *responsibility* to belong. For, my friends, the word *responsibility* is not a mere empty sound any more than the words *Sinecure, Pension, Salary, Grant, Allowance, Fee, Stipend, Living, &c.* All these words have a *meaning*. They represent a parcel of money received by persons ; and why is not *responsibility* to have a *meaning* ? Old George Rose, for instance, has received, in *Salaries* alone, more than a *hundred thousand pounds*. Of course, he will be ready to share in the *responsibility*. The king can *do no wrong* ; but, his servants may ; and it is very certain, that *somebody* has done wrong to this nation ; or, at least, has exposed it to most terrible sufferings and dangers.

Since writing the last five or six paragraphs, the actual state of the last year's taxes has reached my eye.

It appears, that there have been collected, last year, in Great Britain, taxes of all sorts (besides *poor-rates*) to the amount of 57 millions. Now, the Debt required last year, 44 millions and 29 thousand pounds ; and, as more money was borrowed last year, the Debt this year will require, of course, still more. Here, then, the *Debt alone*, which required only nine millions a year before those wars which have ended in the restoration of the Bourbons and the Inquisition, now demands 44 millions out of the 57 millions. There are 13 millions left, then, for Civil List, Army, and Navy, Secret Services, French Emigrants, Colonial Governments, and a hundred other swallow-holes of public money, and all which together will amount to little short of 30 millions, unless the army be disbanded and the pay of the Staff greatly reduced, and, unless all the other heads be greatly reduced.

But, I beg you to observe, that, though 57 millions have been raised in *the last twelve months*, 57 millions will not be raised in *the next twelve months* ; for mind, there are more than 13 millions which have been raised this last year in *property tax* and *war-malt tax*, both of which are *now done away* ; so that, even supposing the present year to be as productive in other taxes as the last, the whole collection would amount to only 44 millions, and that would not be sufficient to meet the annual charge on account of the Debt, leaving not one single farthing for army, navy, civil list, and all other expences.

This is no very consoling prospect for the partizans of the Pitt System. But, very far worse is the *real* prospect before them ; for, it is impossible for the taxes of 1817 to amount to any thing *nearly so much* as the taxes of 1816, exclusive of the war-malt tax and the property-tax. Exclusive of these two, we have seen, that the whole of the taxes amounted, for 1816, to 44 millions ; but, in order to obtain those taxes how many men of property have been *broken up* ! Distresses, sales of

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stock, ruin have overspread the country. The taxes have been gotten from these people; but, the man who has been broken up, can pay no *more taxes*. You have read the story of the boy, who had a goose that had laid him a golden egg every day, and who, eager to become rich all at once, killed the poor goose and ripped her up, expecting to fill his bag with gold; but, who found only *one egg* come nearly to maturity, and who thus lost the supply of gold for ever after. Thus it is, and thus it must be, my friends, when the tax-gatherer seizes and sells the farmer's and tradesman's goods and chattels. The demand is satisfied for this once, but no future demand can ever be made. When I was in America on a visit to a very kind friend in the country, my wife and child took a fancy to some chesnuts which were upon a very fine and very lofty tree; and I happened to express my regret, that the fruit *could not be got at*: "Oh, yes," said he, "we will soon get at it." In less than an hour the tree was levelled with the ground. Upon my protesting against this mode of gathering fruit, my friend observed, that he had *more trees of the same sort standing than he had any need of*. And, if we had more able farmers and tradesmen than we have need of to pay taxes, to cut down a part of them by *Distrainment* and *Exchequer Process* would be of no consequence; but, not having enough to pay taxes as it is, what must be the consequence of totally destroying a considerable part of those out of whom even the last year's taxes have been squeezed! Men, like oranges, when squeezed dry, can be squeezed no more. Therefore, taxes, sufficient for the present expenditure, never can be collected in future, unless the value of the paper-money be again changed, and, even if that were attempted, the fall of the Pitt System of finance would not be prevented. The amount of the taxes for 1817 will not, I am convinced, exceed 35 millions; and even that is an enormous sum to collect in such a state of national beggary. What, then, is to be *done*? Are the army, the navy, the civil list, to go unpaid? Or, are the Fundholders to go

unpaid? These are very serious questions. Many years ago I said it must come to this; and to this it is now come. For, as to *loans* to pay the *interest of a Debt*, I leave you to imagine how dreadfully and how speedily that course must end! It has been proposed to *lower* the interest of the Debt; that is to say, to take from the Fundholders a *part* of what they receive, which, with some few exceptions, would be very just. But, alas! this will not do any good at all, unless the army, civil list, &c. be *reduced from thirty to about five millions a year*; and, even in this latter case, the Fundholders must have their interest reduced *one half* at least.

Now, it will be right for the country to bear in mind, that the Reformers have always protested against the system, which has brought the country into this perilous state. *Hundreds of thousands of families*, very worthy, industrious, and most excellent people, now stand tottering on the very verge of utter ruin. Many of these persons have been long deluded into a belief, that we, who opposed this ruinous system, were *their* and our country's *enemies*. They will now see and feel, that we were their *friends*; and that, if they have been plunged into ruin, the fault has, in some degree, been their own. But they were *deluded*. A base and corrupt press deceived them. Let them now join us, then, as the only means of saving a remnant of what they wish to enjoy.

In the years 1810 and 1811, the Paper-system, which, with taxation, have been the causes of all our miseries, was under discussion in parliament. The OUT party proposed to pass a law to compel the Bank to pay in gold at the end of two years. The IN party said that such a law was unnecessary then; but, agreed, that gold would be paid *when peace came*.—While those discussions were going on, I wrote and published a Series of Letters, under the title of PAPER AGAINST GOLD. In that work, Letter XV. (which work is now re-published) I stated, that, if an attempt was made

to pay in gold, *all the people in trade must be ruined*; or, that the interest of the Debt must be *lowered*, or go *unpaid altogether*. Such an attempt has been made; and the ruin has come. Amongst the whole of the members of the two Houses, there was, upon that occasion, only Sir FRANCIS BURDETT, who appeared to understand any thing of the matter. He said, that it would be utterly impossible to pay the interest of the debt, if the paper were raised in value.

But, when all men are beginning to talk about lowering the interest of the Debt, will nobody propose to lower the *Sinecures, Pensions, and Salaries*? I know, that the nation will be unable to pay the interest of the Debt in full; but, I also know, that if the Fundholder cannot be paid, the *Sinecurist* and *Grantee* ought not to be paid. A vast deal of money has been swallowed up in this way; and surely it ought not to be overlooked, while so many are proposing to lower the interest of the Debt! No: this will not be overlooked; it must become a matter of serious discussion.

But, after all, what hope is there, that any effectual and permanent relief will take place, except through the means of a *Reform in the Parliament*, that measure so strongly recommended by so many eminent men for so many years past? I do not say, that even a reformed parliament would be able to prevent the Fundholder from experiencing a great loss. I do not say, that it would be able, *all at once*, to make the nation prosperous, which has now been plunged into such a depth of misery. I do not say, that it could work this miracle; but, I have no scruple to express my decided opinion that it would, in a very short time, do *complete justice* to all claimants; that it would, all at once, produce great relief to the distressed of all ranks: and that, in a very few years, it would leave scarcely a single pauper in each parish throughout the kingdom, by putting it in the power of all honest and industrious people amply to provide for themselves and their families. This is my

sincere belief. In No. 15 of Vol. 31, published in October last, I have, as I think, *proved* that a Reformed Parliament would be able to do this; and, therefore, I do most anxiously hope that there will be wanted, on the part of the people in general, no effort that can, in any way, tend to promote this great and important object.

Petition, peaceable petition, is the course. No number of men, in any situation of life, are *too few* to sign a petition. There have been, I believe more than *half a million* of names signed to such petitions. These may become *a million*, and that would be two thirds of the *able* male population of Great Britain, excluding those who live on the taxes. I am disposed to believe, that the Parliament, when it finds that this is really the case, will not much *wish* to oppose the desire of the people. At any rate it is the duty of those who wish for a Reform to be vigilant, to be active, to support, by all legal means, those who are willing to take the *lead* in the work, and, above all things, to be ever watchful to defeat the purposes of those, who wish to see the nation plunged into anarchy and bloodshed, of which all the friends of Reform abhor the idea. Let it, too, never be forgotten, that those whose property is now placed in jeopardy, have not the Reformers to blame for it. They have had no hand in any of the measures, which have led to this dreadful state of things: on the contrary, they have always disapproved of those measures; and as for my own part, no small portion of the last *eleven years* of my life, have been employed in endeavouring to make my Countrymen see the gulph which was opening before them, and into which gulph they have now actually been plunged.

Wishing you patience and fortitude to bear up against your present sufferings, and, in the hope, that better days for us all are at hand, I remain, what I have always been,

Your friend,

WM. COBBETT

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